

FROM THE COMMANDANT

The first signs of spring are apparent here at Fort Belvoir as I write this column—trees budding, flowers blooming, and Canadian geese flying north. Other signs familiar to those of us in the professional acquisition workforce (AWF) are typical acquisition cycle events that have been recurring without fail for nearly 40 years—congressional budget hearings (lots of them), Program Objective Memorandum (POM) meetings, building meetings, and a wide array of program reviews.

This year a few “extra” activities are keeping the lights burning in the Pentagon until late at night, such as the Quadrennial Defense Review and its follow-on National Performance Review. Also, our senior acquisition leaders and policy makers are busy formulating, coordinating within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and discussing new acquisition reform (AR) activities and initiatives with the Services, the new Secretary of Defense, and members of the Congress. They are working at an accelerated pace to try to get these initiatives into this year’s legislation.

Ongoing activities here at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) are also keeping the lights on late into the night. For most students, class activities are longer each day. Our faculty are working many extra hours updating all our courses with the latest policy and AR initiatives; and are also inserting Automated Information Systems material into the courses that reflect the Clinger-Cohen Act as well as the earlier merger of the DoDI 8000 series into the 5000 series. Also, they are planning for the upcoming transition of many courses into a distance learning format in order to reach more of the workforce more quickly.

Today, the last day of winter, many AWF members, including those here at the College’s Fort Belvoir campus, are conducting Acquisition Reform Day II activities. Appropriately, the theme for this year’s AR activities is “Sustaining the Momentum—Full Speed Ahead.” (The results of this week’s activities will be reported in a later issue.)

On January 8, the Defense Acquisition Career Development Council (DACDC) met for the first time under its revised charter, bringing together senior OSD and Service leaders to review the AWF career development needs and policies. This was the first meeting in recent years of a high-level group chaired by the Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE) to look at the AWF current education and training status, their needs for the future, and to review planned actions to address those needs. As detailed in our article on p. 60 of this issue, three boards, including the DSMC Board, reported to the Council. Also reporting to the Council at that meeting was Dr. Jacques Gansler, Chairman of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU)/DSMC Board of Visitors (BOV).

The Council directed that DAU move out rapidly on distance learning using Information Age technologies to reach more of the AWF faster and better. With slight modifications, the Council also approved DSMC’s Corporate Plan. Overall, it was a substantive, positive meeting. Our senior acquisition leaders and policy makers fully recognize that, in order to institutionalize AR, we collectively must continue focusing our attention on the education and training needs of the workforce.

On March 4, the DAU/DSMC BOV (representatives from industry and academia) met to review DAU/DSMC operations and future plans. The BOV charter is to provide insights to the President, DAU and the Commandant, DSMC on organization management, curricula, methods of

instruction, facilities, and other matters of interest. The backgrounds and previous work in government, education, and industry of the BOV members enabled them to provide valuable advice that is already stimulating improvement in many areas.

On March 17, as part of its ongoing role on the DACDC, the DSMC Board met to review the recent past and present operations of the College and to comment on future plans, including the POM planning to resource those plans, and to provide customer feedback as representatives of the AWF. In addition to the initial implementation plans of the DSMC Corporate Plan, much discussion focused on the use of distance learning to reach the AWF and the larger AWF (400,000) more quickly and efficiently with quality instruction.

On March 18, representatives of all the consortium schools met at DAU to review and provide suggested revisions to the DAU Draft Distance Learning Plan. The objective was to develop a plan that would comply with the DACDC Action Memo, which included DAE direction that at least 10 percent of DAU’s courses would be converted and delivered by Information Age technologies before the end of FY 97, and an additional 15 percent by the end of FY 98.

As you can see, there are many things being done to improve the capability of the AWF by bringing to them acquisition education and training that is *better, faster, and cheaper*.

By the time you receive this issue, DSMC will have opened its new Mid-Atlantic Region at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the home of the Army’s Communications and Electronics Command. Importantly, that campus is within one day’s drive of Picatinny Arsenal, Lakehurst Naval Air Warfare Center, and the Defense Personnel Support Center in Philadelphia.

This issue includes the farewell message from Dr. Paul Kaminski, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology. Secretary of Defense Cohen recently described him as “the Ben Franklin of Acquisition Reform.” Clearly, he and former Secretary of Defense Perry were the founding fathers in conceiving the revolutionary change to the 40-year-old DoD acquisition process. However, I believe most would agree that converting the concept into reality is principally the result of Dr. Kaminski’s vision, executive abilities, patience, and perseverance.

I am sure Dr. Kaminski would attribute his success to a committed professional acquisition team—but *he led the team*. He led the team like a player-coach, leading the team, yet at the same time always a participant. And because of his charismatic leadership we, the AWF, have done more and better than we ever thought we could. Thank you Dr. Kaminski, and best wishes to you in all your endeavors.

— Brig. Gen. Richard A. Black, U.S. Army
Commandant



Dr. Kaminski's Farewell Message to the Acquisition Workforce

People are our most important asset. Our defense acquisition workforce is blessed with some of the very best and brightest people in the world. During the past two and one-half years, I have observed on many occasions that our workforce is highly dedicated, motivated, and becoming more empowered with each passing day.

Our acquisition workforce is the envy of my counterparts around the world. A couple of months ago, my Russian counterpart asked me how many members of our workforce actually had the authority to sign contracts on behalf of the United States Government. In Russia, decisions are highly controlled—very few people have this authority. My counterpart was floored by my response: a couple of *thousand* contracting officers can sign contracts. At that moment, it became apparent to my Russian colleague that the strength of our system was our *people*.

Quite often, I hear the prevailing view expressed in Washington, D.C., that the defense acquisition workforce is too large. Very little thought is given to the fact that the workforce must first become *better* before it can become *smaller*. I have worked with very small teams that were extremely effective in managing highly classified programs. A key factor was the quality of the people—we were able to select the very best for our team. Our workforce is qualitatively better today than it was four years ago, but we still have a long way to go to create a culture of continuous education and training.

One of the most significant accomplishments made over the past two and one-half years has been the wholesale reengineering of the way we support the warfighter, using teams working together in parallel rather than our past sequential, serial approach. Integrated Product Teams—composed of warfighters, testers, trainers, doctrine writers, acquirers, and their industry contractors—have dramatically improved the way we do business and have significantly shortened our acquisition cycle times. This process reengineering initiative began with OSD-led Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations (ACTD), continued with the fielding of a Bosnia Command and Control Augmentation (BC²A) sys-



tem, and has expanded with the Army's Force XXI experiment, the Navy's "Smart Ship" project, and the stand-up of the Air Force's Battle Labs.

I take the most pride in seeing our people willing to think "out-of-the-box," pushing hard to be better. It means our incentives and rewards are beginning to work. Our program managers are not afraid to take prudent risks to do what is best. There is a much greater sense that we are all on the same team and are all working toward a common goal.

It has been a pleasure to work with you—the finest acquisition professionals in the world. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

— Paul G. Kaminski
Under Secretary of Defense
(Acquisition & Technology)